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THE RETIREMENT OF SIR THOMAS MUIR.

By C. T. LORAM, Durban, South Africa.

The retirement of Sir Thomas Muir, Kt., C.M.G., M.A., LL.D., F.R.S., etc., from the office of superintendent general of education for the province of the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, which took place on June 30, 1915, is an event of interest, not only to educationists, but to the mathematical world. Sir Thomas was born in Lanarkshire, Scotland, on August 25, 1844. He was educated at Wishaw Public School and Glasgow University. From 1868 to 1871 he was sub-warden of College Hall and mathematical tutor at St. Andrews University, Scotland, from which position he proceeded to the principalship of the mathematical and science department of the famous Glasgow high school. In 1892 he was appointed superintendent-general of education for Cape Colony. In this capacity Sir Thomas had control over a system of some 4,500 schools with an enrolment of more than 250,000 pupils. His tenure of office was coincident with a period of social change, political unrest, and war unparalleled in the history of South Africa. That he was able to keep his health and energy unimpaired through this period is due partly to a native physical and mental strength, but largely, in his own opinion, to the fact that he was able to forget the cares of office in his mathematical studies. In addition to the great work of building up a sound and lasting educational system in South Africa, Sir Thomas rendered important services to art and letters as vice-chancellor of the University of the Cape of Good Hope, in which office he had the honor of conferring the degree of LL.D. upon King George V (then Duke of Cornwall and York); as chairman of the board of trustees of the South African Public Library and of the South African Art Gallery; as trustee of the South African museum; and as president of the South African Fine Arts Association and of the Capetown Chamber Music Union.

As a student of mathematics Sir Thomas has for nearly half a century done continuous and valuable original research in mathematics, and is possibly the greatest living authority on the subject of determinants. For his work in this field he received the degree of LL.D. from Glasgow, in 1882 was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of London, and twice won the Keith Medal of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, and a past President of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science.

The great esteem in which Sir Thomas Muir was held by the people of South Africa is reflected in the text of the presentation address which was made to him on the eve of his retirement, and signed by 104 inspectors, instructors, and members of his office staff.

“On your relinquishing the post of superintendent-general of education, the members of the staff of your office and of the body of inspectors and instructors desire to record their high esteem of your work as their official head, and of your personal worth.

"The value and extent of your original work as a mathematical investigator and historian are known throughout the scientific world and have gained you the highest distinction.

"Your wide range of scientific knowledge and your discriminating appreciation of literature, music, and art have borne rich fruit in the control which you have exercised over the South African Public Library, the South African Museum, the Art Gallery, the Chamber Music Union, and similar institutions in the city of Cape Town.

"We do not venture to estimate the value of your labors as the head of the system of public education in this province to the government under which you have served, to the body of school managers and teachers who have been guided by you, and to the whole community of this province and of South Africa generally. A true estimate of the value of that work will be possible only at a later date, when sufficient time has passed to show on what sound and lasting principles you have raised the educational fabric of the Cape Province.

"It has been your duty to shape our school system during a period marked by social change and economic growth, by political unrest, and by the calamity of war. How faithfully and successfully, uninfluenced by any purely political or sectional interests, you have discharged that duty—by the exercise of wide knowledge, unswerving impartiality, clear judgment, thoughtful prevision, unflinching determination and unabating personal energy—will certainly be more fully recognized hereafter. We whose privilege it has been to be associated with you in the great work as subordinates, have had the opportunity of watching the inception of your wise plans, of observing their growth, and of noting the far-sighted prudence, resolute persistence, and administrative tactfulness with which they have been accomplished.

"To each of us our association, in however humble a capacity, with you in your work has afforded a constant revelation of intellectual power and force of will, and has ever provided an incentive to thoughtful consideration, sound judgment, and earnest endeavor.

"To all of us your retirement from your life-work is a matter of deep regret, more especially when we consider that your physical and mental powers display all the energy of youth. And we regret it yet more when we realize that at the present juncture in the history of South Africa there is needed for the wise coördination of its various school systems such a strength of purpose, width of knowledge, and ripeness of experience as we find in you alone.

"It is a cause of gratification to us to know that the release from official life which has been accorded to you finds you still so well able to enjoy and use the leisure which you have so richly earned. That leisure we trust you may for many years be able to devote to the lasting benefit of many of the interests of your adopted land.

"In taking leave of you as our official head we desire to assure you of our very deep respect, of our lasting esteem, and of our most cordial wishes for your personal happiness."